DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 173 068 CS 502 548

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TITLE Mediator, Process Consultant, Etc.: Communication Applied in the Staff Development Coordinator's Role.
PUB DATE Nov 78
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (64th, Minneapolis, Minnesota, November 2-5, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Role; *Communication Skills; *Coordinators; Educational Programs; Group Dynamics; Higher Education; *Job Training; *Organizational Communication; *Residential Schools; *Staff Improvement

ABSTRACT

The duties of a staff development coordinator at a large residential school for the mentally retarded consist of planning, coordinating, and implementing all training for employees. Such a person must function in the multiple roles of educator, process consultant, mediator, troubleshooter, and manager. Training for such a position should include courses that provide understanding and skills in group dynamics, conflict management, person perception, organizational communication, and supervisory management. Many traditional businesses promote people to training positions from within the company, which might require a specialist to accept a lesser position and work up the ladder. A training director can use such structured experiences as role-plays, case study analyses, and group problem solving, but these must relate to actual job situations. Training for such a position should be practical and situational. (TJ)

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ED173868

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# MEDIATOR, PROCESS CONSULTANT, ETC.: COMMUNICATION APPLIED IN THE STAFF DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR'S ROLE

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A paper presented at
Speech Communication Association Convention
Minneapolis, Minnesota
November, 1978

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The intent of this part of the program is to analyze some of the major responsibilities of my position as Staff Development Coordinator at Fort Worth State School, a residential and community-based facility for the mentally retarded, and to suggest certain process and content areas which might prepare one for such a position. It happens that all the major responsibilities require interpersonal communication functioning, so the discussion will also be a communication study of sorts.

In general, the Staff Development Coordinator (Job description -- Appendix 1) manages the planning, coordinating, and implementing of all training for the 800-plus employees of the facility. A large percentage of this training is provided on campus by staff development instructors or other facility staff. The Coordinator has varying levels of direct responsibility for those courses, from actual teaching of certain courses such as interdisciplinary team process and problem-solving, on the one hand, to merely approving a course and documenting its completion if taught by a specialist from another department. Other areas of responsibility include providing staff with information concerning credit and non-credit workshops and courses available around the state of Texas, and assessing staff training needs and desires and securing the human and material resources necessary to meet those needs and desires.

Two recent cases occurred which exemplify this process. The first involved a 6-member team from one of the residential units. The team, through its supervisor, requested consultation and training in two areas: 1. behavior modification therapy of clients and 2. team decision-making and human relations. The request was of an informal nature: a telephoned "Can you come and meet with us to discuss some problems?" The first three meetings resulted in scheduling two of the staff for regular behavior modification training already available plus some additional consultation along with my attendance at team meetings, and consultation as necessary concerning team process. The latter, the team process training, followed the Schein (1969) Process Consultation model for obvious reasons: particularly that the team should learn to handle its own process and human relations problems rather than having to frequently request expert advice. Follow-up study indicates that training in both areas was helpful and adequate. In this case, <u>facility</u> staff provided the expertise necessary to meet the training needs.

In some cases, expertise is either not available within the facility because of time constraints or because "A person is not an expert in his/her own household." For example, recently Staff Development received a request from an executive secretary for a workshop in secretarial communication and human relations. The request resulted from her perceptions that communications were not being handled as professionally as they should be. Informal checks with other high-level secretaries and some administrators verified her perceptions. I as the training coordinator determined that an outside consultant would probably provide more expert and more credible training than anyone from within the system. Therefore, we facilitated the hiring of an outside consultant who had previously provided such a service. Then we scheduled participants who were targeted by their supervisors, and secured the material necessary for the workshop. Again, course evaluations indicated that the workshop successfully met the perceived need.

Other responsibilities have evolved since staff development is in the administrative branch of the facility rather than the line chain of command. In other words, persons can inconspicuously make us aware of needs without jeopardizing their positions. Since mentioning a need to one's supervisor may be discouraged by that supervisor, we are consulted to look further into the situation. The particular roles that we play in these situations are mediator and/or trouble-shooter. I suspect that there is an additional reason why we are consulted in awkward situations like this: both I and my predecessor in this position have been trained in interpersonal communication, team process, human relations, etc., hopefully maximizing the possibilities that such requests will be heard with empathy and will result in an acceptable solution to the problem.

Let us define "mediator" as a third party whose advice or decision is not binding, but who seeks to reach a consensual understanding or, if that is not possible, an acceptable compromise between two or more dissenting parties. Obviously, an "outsider" who has few hidden agendas concerning the problem rather than a supervisor who may have preconceived ideas concerning the dissenting parties and the conflict itself provides better possibility of an acceptable solution. This is certainly not to say that supervisors <u>cannot</u> facilitate the solution of such conflicts, merely that frequently they <u>do not</u> because of their own inherent agendas.

For the same reasons, employees frequently contact Staff Development personnel to act as "trouble-shooters" (i.e., to expedite problem-solution through some overt and/or covert means). As such, one may become a change agent, "a professional who influences innovation-decisions in a direction deemed desirable by a change agency" (Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971). Someone might, for example, anticipate that we could order some materials faster than he/she could through regular channels. Sometimes, also, we are asked to seek more information about rumors of an awkward nature. Frequently, we can inconspicuously check out such reports without offending anyone. These rumors may or may not directly relate to employee training needs. Obviously, we as trainers must pursue such reports and requests with great concern, but also with care and moderation lest we jeopardize our credibility.

There is at least one other role which bears mention: that of supervisor/manager of a department with three instructors, an audio-visual technician, and a secretary. Obviously, issue and personality conflicts arise intra-departmentally which must be handled: therefore, the mediator appears. More importantly, though, a manager must provide the atmosphere within which persons produce their best work. As such, he/she must interface behaviorism and human relations: on the one hand, he/she provides positive reinforcement when appropriate, and, on the other, he/she provides the concern and interest in the worker as a human being and all that this perception entails. Surprisingly enough, in this type of environment, the two apparently opposing desciplines may not be so much at odds. For example, a team manager who encourages participation from all members is both a behaviorist and a humanist.

One additional concept of motivation which is extremely important in an organization is "stretching". Stretching involving assigning responsibilities to a person that are a bit beyond those which the person or the superiors feel he/she is ready for. Underlying stretching is the awareness that we as supervisors and the employees themselves often are not aware of what they (really) are capable of doing. Stretching obviously results in some anxiety and some disappointments, but more often in successes and professional growth. Some success usually encourages an individual to stretch him/herself further and in other directions. In this way, stretching becomes a motivator for more stretching and more productivity, thereby yielding effects far beyond the initial case (Gellerman, 1968).

So far we have discussed five roles: educator, process consultant, mediator, trouble-shooter, and manager. Hopefully, it is obvious how interpersonal communication skills prepare one for such a position. Probably not so obvious, though, are the particular courses one might take and the particular approaches one might pursue to prepare him/herself for such a position. Of course, these suggestions arise from my year of experience in a training coordinator position, and their application is, therefore, limited. Specific courses which may provide necessary understanding and skills are:

1. group dynamics, particularly team functioning and process interaction analysis,
2. conflict management, both interpersonal and organizational,
3. person perception,
4. organizational communication, and
5. supervisory management.

This is by no means an inclusive list. Other courses or skills worthy of mention are: cognitive psychology, social psychology, and general semantics.

The student should also participate in an organizational communication practicum or internship. If the school does not provide such a course, the student should develop his/her own experience through a part-time or summer job and formally analyze interpersonal and group communication in that job. An internship provides one with some familiarity with communication in practice, an awareness that may not result from a graduate or undergraduate degree.

The student should recognize, too, that many traditional businesses and industries promote from within to training positions, requiring one to accept a lesser position and work his/her way up the ladder.

Hopefully, one can attain some awareness of his/her own management style. There are several inventories available to accommodate this learning. The student should also familiarize him/herself with the situational leadership approach a la Hersey and Blanchard, (1977), and McGregor, (1967). An eclectic management style is of considerable aid to a training director.

Since a trainer must utilize a wide variety of teaching tools, the student should participate in, and if possible, facilitate such experiential

methods as role-plays, case study analyses, and group problem-solving. This training director learned quickly how useful structured experiences are, but that they must relate to the actual job situations. Only higher level management staff seem to attempt to relate Pfeiffer and Jones - type role plays and case studies to their actual job situations. For other staff, the trainer must write his/her own role plays and case studies based on actual dynamics occurring in the organization. Therefore, graduate and undergraduate classes which require one to create the experiences in toto are extremely helpful. Other experiences which I have found to be useful are business games, responses to in-basket items, full fledged simulation, and nominal group technique.

A suggestion for college and university faculty is that they seek out teaching staff who have substantial working experience in non-academic organizations. This practical experience should be a requisite for one who would teach organizational communication, though such experience is usually not even listed as "preferred" on job vacancy notices for such positions.

As you can undoubtedly see, my experience, limited as it is, indicates a need for communication training directed toward the practical and situational; with this training, one can best prepare for an organizational staff development position. He/she can then become educator, process consultant, mediator, trouble-shootor, and manager. Since training requires one to utilize interpersonal communication concepts and skills so frequently and in so many different ways, it provides a very exciting and challenging alternative for the graduate.

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Gellerman, Saul W. Management by Motivation. New York: American Management Association, 1968.

Rogers, Everett M., and Shoemaker, F. Floyd. Communication of Innovations. New York: The Free Press, 1971.

Schein, Edgar H. Process Consultation: Its Role in Organization Development. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969.

# STAFF DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST I

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Performs administrative, technical and project direction work in the area of training, staff development and continuing education programs for personnel within a large state agency or institution with a complex organizational structure and extensive field or community operations. Work includes responsibility for the administration, implementation, and direction of specific staff development activities, such as conferences, institutes, workshops and other basic or specialized training within a larger development program. Works under the direction and general supervision of a senior administrator with varied levels of professional, technical and administrative disciplines in concert with staff development teams. Work is performed in accordance with accepted policies of the agency or institution, with considerable latitude for the exercise of initiative and independent judgment in the performance of assigned tasks.

## EXAMPLES OF WORK PERFORMED

Participates in overall planning with senior administrator(s) to provide effective training, staff development and continuing education programs for agency personnel.
Advises on current status of specialized training projects for professional, technical and administrative personnel and new training needs.
Implements, directs or conducts agency orientation training for key staff, administrators and other personnel groups as assigned.
Provides technical assistance and support services to major agency divisions for specialized training and continuing education of agency personnel.
Schedules, assists or conducts cooperative training programs for field or community operations within the policies of the agency or institution.
Designs curriculum and course outlines; develops instructional methods, training aids, manuals and materials appropriate to the conduct of specific agency staff development.
Conducts trainer courses for other staff development specialists or agency staff, and skills training for subordinate staff.
Maintains necessary records, accounts and inventories; administers designated funds for training projects; manages all correspondence and information dissemination appropriate to the assigned area of responsibility, within the policies and procedures of the agency.
Assists in the review and assessment of effectiveness for specific staff development programs, and proposes modifications to improve effectiveness.
As assigned, represents the agency or institution at meetings related to training, staff development and continuing education.
Appropriate to the size and training needs of the institution or field operation, may serve as Director of Training or Assistant Coordinator of Staff Development, within the policies and procedures of the agency.
Performs related work as assigned.

## GENERAL QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

### Experience and Training

Should have considerable, progressively responsible training

experience, some of which should be in a supervisory capacity, and a good understanding of the principles of adult education and administration.

Education

Graduation from an accredited college or university with a bachelor's degree or successful completion of 120 approved college level course credit hours with major work in education, administration, public or human services profession or related field, plus three (3) years experience in conducting or supervising staff development training programs.

Additional supervisory or managerial experience in employee education or training programs may be substituted on the basis of one year's experience for one academic year of study or equivalent credit hours.
Maximum substitution, one year.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Thorough knowledge of training methods and techniques, defining educational objectives, curriculum development and principles of administration and management

Basic understanding of public and human service programs in relationship to state government.

Ability to supervise and instruct others; to establish and maintain good working relationships with superiors, co-workers and subordinates.

# JOB DESCRIPTION
## STAFF DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST

GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS:

Graduation from a college or university supplemented by specialized training. Broad knowledge of training procedures, techniques and department policies. Ability to supervise and instruct Training Specialists. Ability to plan and budget for various training programs.

GENERAL DUTIES:

Serves as administrator of preservice and in-service training programs, and coordinator of continuing education. Answer to the Director of Personnel and Staff Development for authority and responsibility.

| JOB RESPONSIBILITIES | PERFORMANCE STANDARDS |
|---|---|
| Duties - Performs or causes the following to occur: | Performance will be up to standard when: |
| 1. Determines Training Needs | 1. A. Seeks feedback from Directors regarding program needs.<br>B. Requests information from employees verbally and by survey regarding needs.<br>C. Keeps EEAR Cards to determine educational level of employees. |
| 2. Sets Up Programs | 2. A. Selects and arranges for locations most appropriate to training objectives.<br>B. Utilizes instructor(s) most knowledgeable, and/or most capable of conducting program.<br>C. Clears trainee release time with division head and/or immediate supervisor. |
| 3. Teaches | 3. A. Prepares classroom, materials, equipment, course outlines, and sets up at least 12 hours prior to course time.<br>B. Plans course with expected behavioral objectives, multi-media considerations, and method of evaluation.<br>C. Individualizes instructions where feasible.<br>D. Distributes training schedules to other staff at least one week prior to first classes. |

| JOB RESPONSIBILITIES | PERFORMANCE STANDARDS |
|---|---|
| 4. Records | 4. A. Establishes system which allows for filing and retrieving of class records, materials, methods, etc.<br>B. Keeps adequate records which lend themselves to easy access to statistical data and reference. |
| 5. Evaluates | 5. Sets up systems of evaluation to determine effectiveness of training programs in terms of staff better meeting their job responsibilities. |
| 6. Develops Curricula | 6. Designs curricula to meet the needs of staff members.<br>A. Appropriate<br>B. Answers needs<br>C. Objectively evaluative |
| 7. Produces and Utilizes Audio-Visual Aids | 7. Develops teaching aids to effectively implement training.<br>A. Appropriate to subject<br>B. Good quality pictures and voice<br>C. Compatible with A-V machine operation |
| 8. Supervises | 8. A. Personnel<br>(1) Observes employees in day-to-day activities.<br>(2) Gives advice and direction as necessary.<br>(3) Assists with employee job description.<br>(4) Evaluates employees per Department policy.<br>B. Equipment<br>(1) Develops and maintains equipment check-out list.<br>(2) Equipment remains operational<br>(3) As breakdowns occur, contacts maintenance to start repair proceedings.<br>(4) Provides in-service training on equipment operation and preventive maintenance. |
| 9. Develops Self Professionally | 9. A. Attends Staff Development Council meetings as they are called.<br>B. Attends other training sessions or professional meetings as appropriate. |

| JOB RESPONSIBILITIES | PERFORMANCE STANDARDS |
|---|---|
| 10. Coordinates Outside Training | 10. A. Gives assistance and maintains records of training for staff done outside the facility.<br>B. Keeps staff members informed about training as information is received. |
| 11. Manages | 11. Determines Departmental need and budgets accordingly. |
| 12. Other duties | 12. As assigned. |